

## **Uncle Dan's Report Card Pilot Test – Research Summary**

**Jesse Graham, University of Virginia**

Based on the surveys collected from parents and teachers, the 2005 pilot implementation of the Uncle Dan's Report Card (UDRC) program was very successful, generating enthusiasm and interest across the board. This report will give an overview of the comments and overall program evaluations, as well as comparisons of behavioral changes between control and UDRC pilot schools in three Kansas school districts. The aim of the report is to 1. summarize how the program was received by students, parents and teachers, 2. present an analysis of behavioral changes uniquely associated with the program, and 3. identify aspects of the Uncle Dan's Report Card Program that work well, as well as potential areas for improvement.

### Overview of pilot study

The Uncle Dan's Report Card program was introduced to kindergarten classes in a six-week trial period in six elementary schools and three school districts: Linn and Miller (Dodge City School District), Leawood and Stilwell (Blue Valley School District), and Stony Point North and New Stanley (Kansas City Kansas School District). The report cards were mailed to parents by the Governor's office, and also distributed by the kindergarten teachers. For purposes of research comparison, kindergarten classes in six control schools were selected that would not take part in the program; these elementary schools, chosen from the same three school districts, were matched to pilot schools in terms of socio-economic status, geographic area and urban or rural environment. Control schools were Beeson and Central (Dodge City School District), Stanley and Mission Trail (Blue Valley School District), and Stony Point South and Frances Willard (Kansas City Kansas School District). Identical surveys were given to parents and teachers of both control and UDRC pilot schools, both before and after the trial period (see Appendix). The purpose of these surveys was to measure any behavioral changes over the trial period, and to separate the effects of the pilot program from general behavioral change trends in the first weeks of kindergarten, via comparison with control schools. An additional survey (last

in the Appendix) was given to parents and teachers in UDRC schools at the end of the trial period; the purpose of this survey was to gauge participants' evaluations of the program and its various components, and to provide an opportunity for feedback on ways in which the program may be improved.

#### Program evaluation by UDRC pilot school parents and teachers

Parents and teachers in pilot test schools were given a questionnaire at the end of the 6-week trial period (see third survey in the Appendix). Responses to the questions on overall rating and effectiveness for component habits were very high, averaging between 8 and 9 (on a 10-point scale) for questions 1, 3, 5, and 7. When asked why they gave their ratings (questions 2, 4, 6 and 8), parents gave a multitude of responses, but the majority centered on the UDRC's usefulness as a tool for talking to their children about various habits. Other frequent comments highlighted the motivational benefits of the report card, in that children would actually get excited about doing a task that would allow them to put another mark on the card. Other stated uses/benefits included reinforcing positive behaviors both at home and at school (working in concert with teachers); reminding parents of the values to instill (with the card as a reference); and letting children feel more responsible for their own daily activities. Many parents felt that they had already noticed a change in their children's manners and habits, and several added that they wish such a program existed when they were in school.

Because the vast majority of comments were positive (over 95%), we found it necessary to focus on negative or critical comments to search for ways to improve the program. The most common piece of critical advice was to make the report card smaller, so that it could fit on the fridge or be filled out by the child her/himself at a desk. (Other parents, however, said they or their children liked the poster-sized card.) Adding pictorial representations for each habit was also suggested, and some added that separate cards for children (pictures and stickers) and parents (paper and pencil) would be helpful. All of these suggestions point to useful possibilities for future improvement. In fact, some parents and teachers noted that the flexibility of the UDRC program is a strength, in that the format and even contents can be modified for different age groups or situations as needed.

One of the primary purposes of the pilot study was to find out how appropriate parents found the specific items on the Uncle Dan's Report Card. When asked if they thought any of the

items should not be included, only three answered affirmatively (specifying chores or suggesting combinations of many items into one). When asked if there were any items they felt were missing, only two parents answered affirmatively (suggesting respect for peers on the bus and a space to write the child's positive activities not fitting into the specified categories). Finally, we wanted to know if parents would actually use the card, and how often. On average, parents reported that they used the card 2-4 times per week, but responses ranged from never to twice a day. For the parents who never or rarely used the card, the most common reason was lack of time. Two parents indicated that they already taught and expected the card's habits and home, and did not need it. Evaluations of the program tended to be slightly more negative for the parents that reported they did not use the card, and in fact there were significant correlations between frequency of use and overall rating of UDRC ( $r=.56$ ,  $p<.01$ ), as well as effectiveness of the three categories of habits ( $r=.35$ ,  $r=.41$ ,  $r=.43$ , all  $p<.01$ ). Supporting this relation, many of the parents who frequently used the program said they felt the program worked better the more they used it. It thus seems likely that efforts to improve the effectiveness of UDRC will be intertwined with efforts to encourage parents and children to use it more.

### Comparisons with control schools

For each pilot school, a control school was selected (matched by district and approximate socio-economic status) that did not participate in the UDRC program. Questions on relevant behaviors were given to these schools as well, before and after the UDRC intervention (first and second surveys in the Appendix). The primary research question was whether the UDRC program schools would show greater improvement on relevant behaviors than the control schools. Comparisons of post-intervention behavior ratings between UDRC and control schools (independent-samples t-tests) revealed no significantly higher scores for UDRC schools. On two questions (kindness and reading) control schools actually averaged higher than UDRC schools post-intervention, but it was found that *pre*-intervention control schools averaged higher than UDRC schools on these two and 11 other questions. Teacher ratings of student obedience were marginally higher for UDRC than control schools after the intervention, and there was no difference before the intervention. Because of the anonymous nature of the surveys, it was not possible to directly link each person's pre- and post-intervention surveys to obtain a difference score for each student. Nevertheless, comparisons of pre-post differences are more useful to

compare between UDRC and control schools, especially as there were so many pre-existing score differences before the intervention. As shown in Table 1, UDRC schools showed increased parent ratings of children’s habits regarding chores, hygiene, promptness, organization, manners, reading, screen-time management, meals and sleep habits; this is a very promising finding, in that it shows improvements in nine of the 15 target behaviors over just a six-week trial period. By contrast, control schools showed increases in three habits (organization, reading and sleep), and decreases in two habits (manners and respect). These data from the control schools suggests that there may be a general trend for kindergarten students’ organization, reading and sleep habits to improve as they begin the school year. Improvements in habits of chores, hygiene, promptness, manners, screen-time management and meals, however, were unique to UDRC schools and could be more confidently ascribed to positive benefits of the program. Furthermore, UDRC schools did not show the drop in manners and respect ratings control schools did, suggesting an ameliorating or even preventive use for the program.

Besides these increases and decreases, Table 1 also shows some of the pilot study’s most useful data – namely, the mean scores for individual items. As we expected, parents tend to rate their own children highly (even before or without an intervention), but ratings of their habits regarding chores, organization and sleep were significantly lower than for the other habits. Thus it is particularly encouraging that the UDRC intervention showed increases in all three of these “problem” areas.

Pre-post difference scores were calculated for each school, to observe differences between pilot and control students at the more specific level of schools. Average changes for each behavior are shown in Figure 1.<sup>1</sup> This figure also shows improvements (of .25 or greater) in nine of the 15 target habits for UDRC schools, compared with three improvements and two decreases for control schools. These positive effects were not completely consistent across school districts: UDRC schools in KCK and Blue Valley had strong improvements in all or most of these nine areas, but schools in Dodge City showed improvements in only two (reading and sleep), and decreases in manners and screen-time management. This is partially explained by comparing pre-intervention surveys in the six UDRC schools; initial parent ratings were

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<sup>1</sup> Because these averages were calculated based on individual school differences, they will differ slightly from the averaged changes in Table 1.

significantly higher for Dodge City than the other two districts, so there may have simply been less room for improvement.

It is clear from Figure 1 that magnitude of the changes varies considerably from habit to habit; UDRC improvements in organization, reading and sleep far outstrip the same improvements found in control schools. Although improvements of less than one point on a 10-point scale may not seem noteworthy at first, it must be remembered that behavioral changes (particularly those outside the classroom) have been notoriously difficult for character education and moral development programs to achieve. There is also a ceiling effect for positive changes, in that initial parent ratings were high, averaging 8 on a 10-point scale. The fact that UDRC was able to produce even minor improvements in nine positive habits over just six weeks is cause for much optimism about the efficacy of the program overall.

Surveys were also given to the kindergarten teachers before and after the trial period, allowing for another comparison of behavioral changes between UDRC and control schools. Data from teacher surveys are summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2.<sup>2</sup> As these show, students in UDRC schools had increases<sup>3</sup> in teacher-rated habits of behavior, manners and rule-following, while students in control schools showed improvements in teacher ratings of behavior only, as well as decreases in organization and healthy eating. This data suggests a universal improvement in overall teacher-rated behavior in the first weeks of kindergarten, as both UDRC and control schools had increases in these ratings. Improvements in classroom manners and rule-following, however, were unique to UDRC schools, and UDRC schools did not show the control schools' decreases in teacher-rated student habits for organization and healthy eating. As with the parent ratings, teacher surveys indicate improvements uniquely associated with the UDRC program, including possible prevention of negative habit trends during the trial period.

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<sup>2</sup> Table 2 and Figure 2 represent the same data. Specific school change scores could not be computed because only two schools returned both pre- and post-tests, so all numbers are based on across-school averages.

<sup>3</sup> Criterion of significant change for teacher ratings was 1 point, as opposed to .25 for parent ratings. This is because there were much fewer teacher ratings than parent ratings, and so confidence intervals were wider. Because change scores could not be computed for each student (surveys were anonymous, and pre- and post-surveys could not be paired up) it was not possible to compute the exact confidence interval for each change score shown in the figures. Criteria of .25 and 1.0 are approximations based on overall standard deviations of parent and teacher survey ratings.

## Conclusions

These comparison data fit very well with the impression given by the parent and teacher comments on the program's effectiveness: the Uncle Dan's Report Card Program was indeed effective in uniquely contributing to improvements in student habits and behaviors, as rated by both parents and teachers. As Figures 1 and 2 show, UDRC schools had increases in parent ratings of nine of the 15 target habits (and prevention of decreases in two), and increases in teacher ratings of three of the 12 target habits (and prevention of decreases in two). Such improvements, and lack of improvements, point to areas of both efficacy and potential improvement for the program. Moreover, parent and teacher evaluations of the program show overwhelming support and enthusiasm for the basic idea, and the content areas themselves. This positive qualitative reaction, along with the quantitative comparison between UDRC and control schools, bodes well for the program's future success. Overall, results suggest that the UDRC program has the potential to make a significant difference in the lives of parents and students, and could be an important force for promoting values and character education.

**Table 1. Average parent-reported behavior scores, before and after trial period**

	PRE control	POST control	PRE UDRC	POST UDRC
Chores	6.66	6.66	<b>6.26</b>	<b>6.71</b>
Hygiene	9.13	9.28	<b>8.75</b>	<b>9.00</b>
Promptness	8.42	8.24	<b>7.89</b>	<b>8.30</b>
Obedience	7.55	<i>7.57</i>	7.16	7.23
Organization	<b>6.71</b>	<b>7.12</b>	<b>6.72</b>	<b>7.34</b>
Honesty	8.07	8.28	7.99	7.99
Kindness	8.47	8.37	8.16	8.19
Manners	<i>8.46</i>	<i>8.11</i>	<b>8.01</b>	<b>8.26</b>
Respect	<i>8.46</i>	<i>8.16</i>	8.10	8.15
Gratitude	8.52	8.70	8.25	8.47
Reading	<b>8.46</b>	<b>8.71</b>	<b>7.87</b>	<b>8.48</b>
Screen	8.12	8.28	<b>7.38</b>	<b>7.87</b>
Meal	8.69	<i>8.77</i>	<b>8.32</b>	<b>8.73</b>
Sleep	<b>7.26</b>	<b>7.56</b>	<b>6.72</b>	<b>7.55</b>
Exercise	8.17	8.23	7.91	7.86

(bold = increase of .25 or more, italics = decrease of .25 or more)

**Table 2. Average teacher-reported behavior scores, before and after trial period**

	PRE control	POST control	PRE UDRC	POST UDRC
Behavior	<b>5.22</b>	<b>6.25</b>	<b>5.33</b>	<b>6.61</b>
Manners	4.89	5.75	<b>5.00</b>	<b>6.53</b>
Reading	5.11	5.00	6.00	5.19
Honesty	6.44	5.50	5.58	5.78
Kindness	5.56	5.25	5.67	6.06
Rule-following	4.94	5.50	<b>5.25</b>	<b>6.33</b>
Promptness	7.33	6.50	6.33	6.06
Organization	5.39	4.25	5.67	5.28
Healthy Eating	5.83	4.50	5.41	5.64
Sleep	5.61	5.50	5.50	5.25
Exercise	6.22	6.25	5.50	5.78
Attention	4.72	4.75	5.50	5.72

(bold = increase of 1.0 or more, italics = decrease of 1.0 or more)

Figure 1. Average change in parent-rated behaviors during trial period

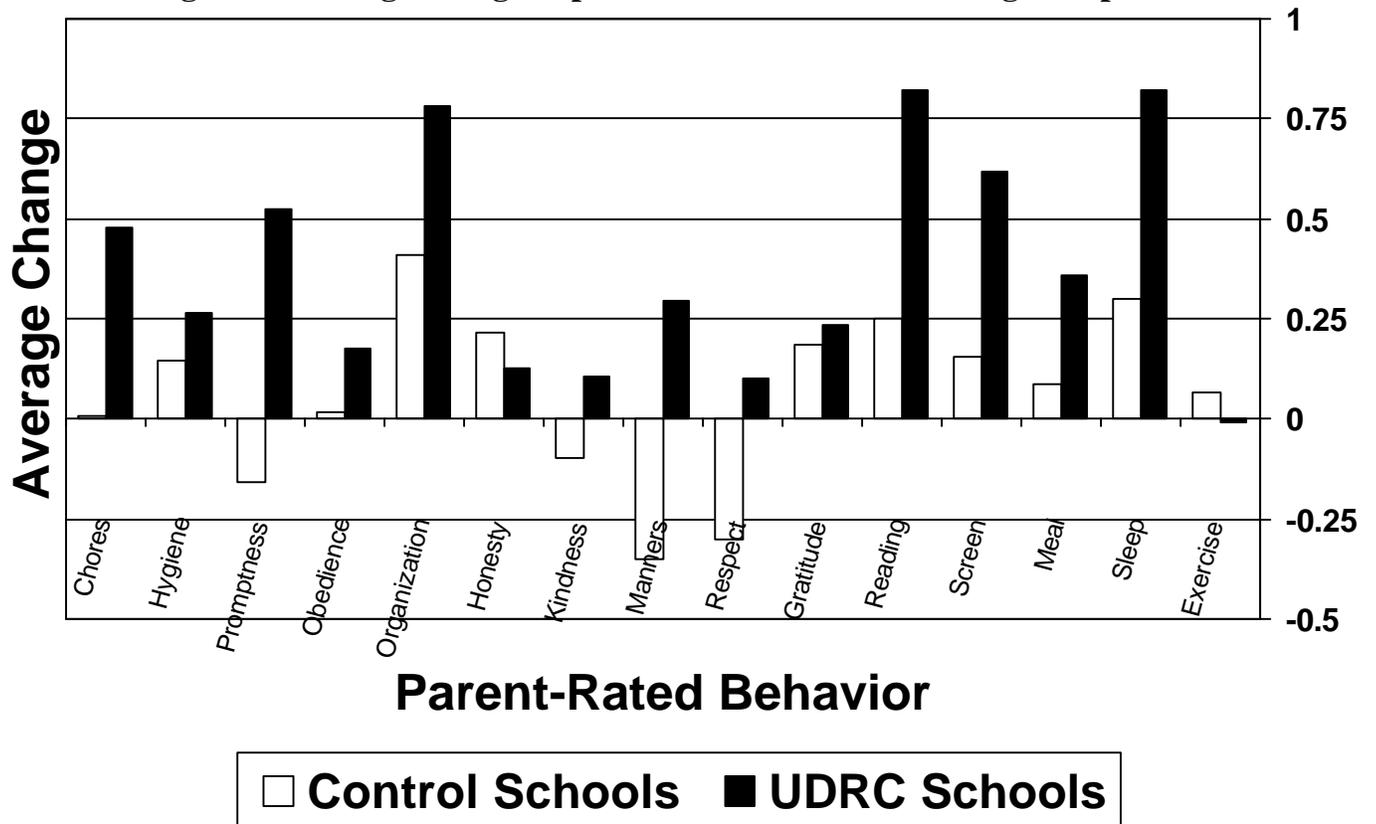
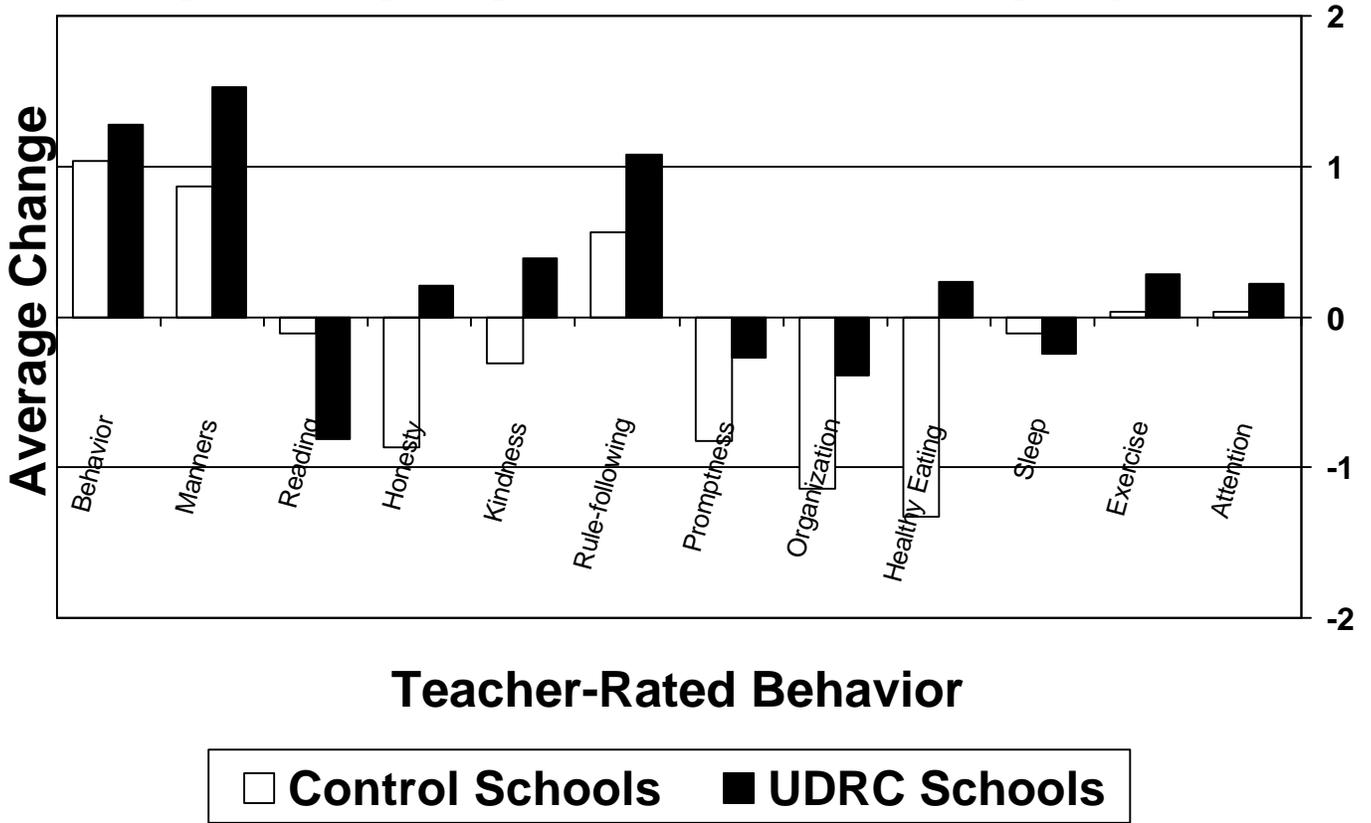


Figure 2. Average change in teacher-rated behaviors during trial period





11. How often does your child read or want you to read to him or her?  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
  
12. How often does your child want to do something other than watch TV, use the computer, or play video games?  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
  
13. How often does your child eat a healthy dinner with the family?  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
  
14. How often does your child get 11 hours of sleep at night?  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
  
15. How often does your child get at least 1 hour of exercise every day?  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
  
16. Check the daily habits that you think are important for your child to practice:
- ? Doing morning and evening chores
  - ? Bathing and brushing teeth regularly
  - ? Following directions and being on time
  - ? Taking books, notes and lunch to and from school
  - ? Being truthful and honest
  - ? Doing acts of kindness
  - ? Using good manners
  - ? Respecting self and others
  - ? Expressing gratitude
  - ? Reading at home or asking you to read to him
  - ? Managing screen time – TV watching, using the computer, playing video games
  - ? Eating healthy dinner with family
  - ? Getting at least 11 hours of sleep each day
  - ? Getting at least one hour of exercise each day

### Uncle Dan's Report Card Teacher Survey

1. In general, how well-behaved are the students in your class?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good

2. How good would you say your students' classroom manners are?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good

3. How good would you say your students' habits are for being read to or reading at home?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good

4. How good would you say your students' habits are for truthfulness and honesty?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good

5. How good would you say your students' habits are for treating each other kindly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good

6. How good would you say your students' habits are for following rules in class?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good

7. How good would you say your students' habits are for promptness?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very				neutral					very
poor									good





